

Bible Study Guide: Week of 11-7-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 21:5-19

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, [Jesus] said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.” ⁷They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them. ⁹“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. ¹²“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

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Luke reports a similar account to the one in Mark 13 in this passage. In Mark’s version, Jesus’ comments are prompted by “one of his disciples” marveling at the temple complex. Here in Luke’s version the more generic “some” were speaking about the temple. Those who spoke about the temple here address Jesus as “teacher,” a title for Jesus never used by the disciples in Luke’s account. We may suppose that folks among the crowd following Jesus were the ones speaking about the temple and its splendor. The magnificence of the temple is harshly juxtaposed with Jesus’ disturbing reminder that desolation will one day stand in place of the temple itself. Rather than asking how Jesus knows this to be true or asking why this will come to pass the people instead wonder when it will happen and how they will know when it is about to happen.

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The answer Jesus gives to them, however, doesn’t really answer their question. Jesus doesn’t tell them when it will happen. Rather, he warns them to avoid being led astray. This verb “to be led astray” occurs only this one time in Luke/Acts. It comes up in other places in the New Testament, where it can mean to be led into sin, to succumb to false teachings, or to be misled regarding the end of days. This seems to be a warning against literal false messiahs, that is those who come literally claiming to be a new incarnation of Jesus himself, but also a warning against

anything that would lead God's people away from their mission and ministry. The warnings of wars, insurrections, earthquakes, and so on are not intended by Jesus to be direct signs pointing to the imminent destruction of the temple—after all, he says, “the end will not follow immediately. Rather, he seems to be saying, “bad things are going to happen at any given time, but the important thing is to keep focused on the mission at hand and on Jesus rather than on any false prophets or fanciful predictions.

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Jesus seems to give his followers more bad news here. Before the general calamities described in vv.8-11 Jesus says that many of them will suffer the hardships described in vv. 12-17. These hardships, in fact, correlate directly with the persecutions and sufferings the Apostles endure in the book of Acts. Jesus is warning them that hard times are coming, yet notice the verses of hope and optimism that end this section. Even though some of them will be killed and reviled, “not a hair will perish” and through patiently enduring hardship, the disciples will find life (i.e. “gain your souls.”) The assurance the disciples have is that Jesus' promises and his life will outlast all suffering and hardship. No matter what happens to them they are assured life with Jesus forever.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Jesus was speaking primarily to his first hearers in this passage, some of whom would live to see the literal destruction of the temple in 70 AD. Given that what Jesus “predicted” happened already, how might this passage apply to us today?**
- 2. Why do you think Jesus took the opportunity to talk about the coming destruction of the temple when people were marveling at how magnificent the temple was?**
- 3. Who do you think Jesus is talking about when he says, “many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’?”**